

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIFTY-THREE AWOLP CHILDREN FOUND; CHIEF JUSTICE PRAISES PROGRESS, SAYS JOB'S NOT OVER

LANSING, MI, November 14, 2002 – Recent efforts by state courts have led to 53 children who were absent from their legal placements being found, the Michigan Supreme Court reported today.

In an October 31 letter from State Court Administrator John D. Ferry Jr., chief judges of 24 Michigan circuit courts were told to set up special dockets to find children who are absent without legal permission (AWOLP). "Locating these children must be of the highest priority," Ferry stated. His letter went to judges in counties where absent children are listed as having resided.

As of November 12, the affected courts had either located children or had started proceedings to do so.

Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan praised the courts for their efforts, but cautioned that the courts' work was not done.

"This is a heartening beginning, to have located 23 percent of these children in so short a time," she said. "But the job is not over until every child is accounted for. I urge these courts to continue their good work and to make finding these children a top priority."

The chief justice stressed that courts that have not yet located children are in the process of doing so.

"These are extremely difficult cases, and not every child can be located quickly," she said. "Some of these cases require multiple hearings to find witnesses who can then furnish leads about a child."

Children who are AWOLP typically have run away or been illegally removed from a legal placement. The person who abducts a child from a legal placement is often a family member.

The circuit court's family division has jurisdiction over cases of child abuse and neglect. Children who have run away or been taken from legal placements are under the court's jurisdiction.

As of November 12, the affected courts reported as follows:

County	No. of AWOLP children (10/28)	Children located through 11/8
Allegan	9	1
Bay	1	0
Berrien	2	1
Branch	1	1
Calhoun	2	0
Cass	1	0
Crawford	1	0
Genesee	17	3
Grand Traverse	3	3
Ingham	11	0
Jackson	3	0
Kalamazoo	4	1
Kent*	9	1
Lake	2	2
Lenawee	1	0
Luce	1	0
Macomb	3	2
Monroe	3	2
Montcalm	1	0
Muskegon	7	0
Oakland*	11	1
Saginaw	1	1
Washtenaw	1	0
Wayne	137	33
Statewide	232	53 (23 %)

* These courts also identified AWOLP children who were not on the 10/28 list generated by the FIA.

Absent children are featured on the FIA Child Locator web site at www.michigan.gov/fia. Anyone with information about a child featured on the web site can call the toll-free Tip Line at 1-866-729-0026.

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